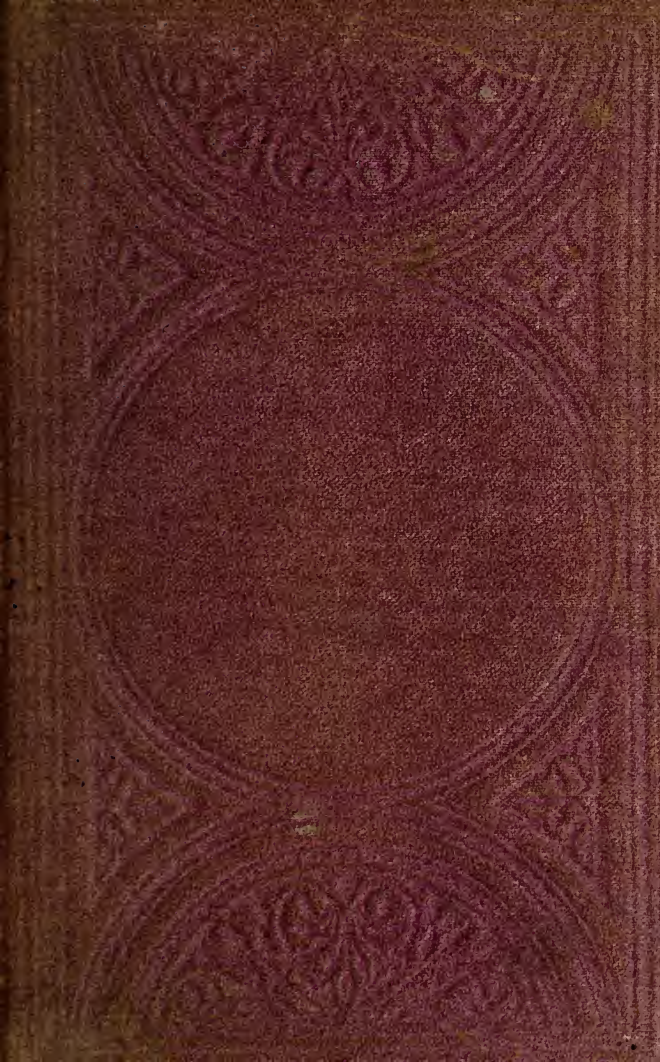




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JOHN TELLING HIS GRIEF TO HIS MOTHER.

See page 16

JOHN WHEELER'S TWO UNCLES;

OR,

LAUNCHING INTO LIFE.

A Story for Boys.

THREE ILLUSTRATIONS.

New York:

PUBLISHED BY CARLTON & PORTER,

SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, 200 MULBERRY-STREET.

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EDITOR'S NOTE.

THIS little book contains the simple story of a boy remarkable for honor and probity. It states some singular experiences, but the author assures me that, excepting names and places, it is a true history of a real personage. As such I commend young John Wheeler's fidelity to his principles to the study and imitation of all the boys in our Church and nation.

D. W.



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John Wheeler's Two Uncles

CHAPTER I.

THE PLAYGROUND.

LOUD shouts arose from the playground around the village school at Stockton. A number of boys were playing their merry games with indescribable noise and energy.

"Now then, Harry, we have an hour to spare yet!" exclaimed one fine looking lad to another; "what shall we play?"

"O, prisoner's base, by all means."

"No, no," cried another "let's play cross tag."

"I'm for cricket," shouted a third.

"And I for base ball," cried a fourth.

A loud and long altercation then followed.

"We haven't enough by one for base ball," said the first speaker. "What shall we do?"

"For that matter we haven't enough to play any other game. How many are we short?"

"Only one, to make even sides."

"Only one! It's a pity to lose a game for want of one boy. I guess some other fellow will soon come along."

"Are all our class here?"

"No; John Wheeler ain't here."

"John Wheeler! Pooh! he's nobody."

"Talk of an angel and you see the tip of his wings. Here comes John Wheeler now."

"What on earth brings him here so soon to-day?"

"Perhaps to play; perhaps his mother gave him permission to."

"She has perhaps told him he may walk across the yard and back again."

"How did he manage to get away from her apron string, I wonder?"

As the boys talked in this mocking strain the object of their ridicule gradually approached nearer. He was a pale and slender lad, of open, ingenuous countenance, but quite poorly clad, and with the humble expression which belongs to those who are much persecuted and have not that rude vigor which can defy the opinions of others. He now came near them with a quiet step and pensive air.

"Halloo, John Wheeler; where did you spring from?" cried one of the boys.

"What do you want this time of day?" asked another.

"My friends," said the oldest boy, "the arrival of Mr. Wheeler is a great honor. Let us do something to signalize it. He has come, patched coat, patched boots, patched pants, and all. Let us celebrate his arrival in a distinguished man-

ner. I propose three cheers for Mr Wheeler?"

The boys caught at the proposal. Three loud, long, derisive cheers arose over the playground.

The poor lad thus treated drew near, looked at them in mournful surprise, and then stopped. His face flushed, and his quivering lips bore witness to the agitation of his mind.

"Come, fellows," said one of the boys, "Wheeler will do to make up the one wanting to our game. Let us begin. What do you say, Wheeler? Come along here and play."

"Yes, come along; make haste; never mind what your mother says," said a second boy.

"Why," drawled a little boy, "his mother won't whip him for playing ball, will she?"

"He's afraid she will. Don't you see him tremble?" replied one of the former speakers.

Wheeler still stood there, but did not move. His face was now pale as marble.

“Wheeler,” cried the oldest boy, in a tone of command, “come along; don’t you see we’re waiting.”

But Wheeler turned round, and was about to walk off.

“What’s that? Do you dare disobey us?” cried the same boy, running after him. “Come back, or I’ll give you the greatest pounding you ever got in your life.”

He ran after Wheeler, and catching him rudely by the arm, whirled him suddenly round.

Wheeler stretched out his hand and looked sternly at his pursuer.

“Burton, go back; don’t lay a hand on me. I’ve been persecuted in this school for years. I’ll not endure it another day. I tell you don’t touch me.”

Burton stared at Wheeler in amazement. This lad had always endured every

taunt uncomplainingly. The sight of such a one turning upon his tormentors was striking.

"As to pounding me," continued the angry boy, "if you are wise you will not touch me with so much as your little finger."

"Why won't I dare to, you mean little wretch? Look here—"

He stretched out his hand toward Wheeler's face. In another moment he would have struck him. But Wheeler darted aside. Taking one hand out of his pocket, where he had placed it at the approach of Burton, he disclosed, to the astonished eyes of the school boys, his jackknife as he said :

"Now, Burton, touch me if you dare!"

Burton leaped back as though an adder had stung him. The other boys stood spellbound. Wheeler looked for a moment upon the whole of them with a glance of unutterable scorn, and then walked quietly away.

The boys looked at one another in amazement mixed with horror. That he, the one whom all had joined in despising and persecuting, should thus turn upon them with the manner of a desperado was more than they could understand.

Wheeler meanwhile had replaced his knife in his pocket, and walked toward his home. He was the son of a poor widow, whose chief support arose from a little piece of ground around her little cottage. She was feeble and sickly. John, her only son, was her only tie to life, and for his education and welfare she toiled unceasingly. She was not unaware of the persecution to which he was subjected, and she knew too that there lurked in his mind a dangerous thirst for revenge, which might one day break out and overwhelm him in ruin.

John came walking slowly up the lane that led to his house. His face was still marked by the traces of his recent passionate feeling. The change attracted his

mother's notice. Her heart beat fast as she saw him enter, and she feared the worst.

"Why, John!"

This was all that she could say.

John flung himself into a chair by the window and rested his face on his hand.*

"I've done it, mother."

"*Done* it! done *what*! for pity's sake tell me," said his mother.

"Left that school forever!"

"Left the school? How? When?"

John then proceeded in a calm and collected manner to relate what had happened. The behavior of the boys was nothing more than a repetition of their customary treatment of him, and it was no new thing to his mother, who had often listened with a throbbing heart to the story of the persecutions of her son.

But when he told how he had actually been carried so far away as to take out his knife; when she reflected that he might have used it to the injury of his

* See Frontispiece.

schoolmates, her heart beat quickly, and she almost trembled with emotion.

"I know, I know," said her son, reading her thoughts in her features. "You will tell me of the danger of yielding to my feelings, and warn me of the effects. But it's no use. I cannot trust myself. If I were to go to that school any longer the scorn and ill treatment that I receive from those boys would either make me resist or drive me mad."

"O John! John! my son! How can you talk in such a way?"

"Well, mother, do not try to urge me to go back to that school."

"You've borne it so long. If you had only held out to the end. Only three months more would have brought you through."

"Well, I have learned nearly all the course, and to leave now will be no great loss. Do not speak to me about the school again, mother. My mind is made up; I cannot go back."

"What will you do?"

"Get my own living."

"Where? how?" asked his mother.

"I'll go to New York and get into some situation."

"To New York! Will you leave your mother, John?"

"Mother, you know I will only leave you to be able to assist you the more thoroughly. For years I have depended upon you. It is time now that I did something not only for myself, but for you."

"You can get something to do without leaving me, my son."

"But I would not live in this town, mother. It's like the school. The boys hate me in school and despise me. So the people in the town would keep me down because I am poor."

"O no, my son! If you were in some honorable situation you could do well."

"Mother," replied the boy, "this town appears to me to be very peculiar. Most

of the people here are rich, and they seem to despise any of the poor people who seek to rise. Had I not gone to school I would not have been noticed for good or evil. As I went there the boys considered me their inferior, and have done all they could to injure me; I have borne with them as patiently as I could for your sake; but now I have made up my mind to leave the town and the school together."

"O John! what can I say to you?"

"Say? why you can be a brave woman; give me your blessing, and let me go. Bid me 'God speed.' Let me go into the great world and work my way, as many a poor country lad has done before, and will do again till the end of time. Mother, I'm determined to be rich. I've found that rich men are honored and respected, while the poor are miserable and despised. My aim will be to become rich and honored as soon as possible."

“John,” replied the widow, solemnly, “you have a very bad spirit to-day. See to what length of evil feeling one sin will lead the heart. You yielded to your vengeful passions at school, and now you come home and utter sentiments which are at variance with all true religion. If you knew what riches really were you would be far from valuing them so highly. There are other things besides money, my son, in this life. Virtue, friendship, love, a quiet conscience, all these are of far more importance. You say you have resolved not to go back to school. Stay away then. I will not prevent you. I will not even prevent you from going to New York if you have really determined to go. But let this be a matter of no sudden or hasty purpose. Let a few days pass, and then if you calmly and considerately determine to go away I will give you my blessing and say, ‘God speed you.’ At present, however, let the matter rest.”

“How long must I wait, dear mother?” asked the boy.

“At least a week, my son. During that time think it over seriously, and, above all, pray over it.”

“Mother, you are the kindest and best of parents. I am sorry that I grieved you. But—but—” and John’s voice faltered, “I could not bear it; you do not know how hard it is to bear these cowardly persecutions.”

“I know your feelings well, my dear son,” said the widow, rising and fondly kissing him. “Do you suppose that I sat calmly here and listened unmoved while you have told me what you have had to undergo every day? Not so; I have felt it almost as much as yourself. I do not blame you for feeling wounded; I know you cannot help it. But I do blame you very much for yielding to your feelings so far. O John, if you had gone so far as to have injured any one with that knife!”

“Well, mother, let it pass. Perhaps in future I will control myself better. At present let us talk of something else.”

CHAPTER II.

OUT INTO THE WORLD.

A WEEK passed away. John's resolution had not changed. Nor did his mother's objections increase. In fact, the more she reflected on John's disposition and on his prospects, the more she felt inclined to sacrifice her own feelings and seek only the welfare of her child.

As for John Wheeler, his feelings may readily be imagined. What ardent and enterprising lad has ever yet been otherwise than eager to try his strength in a combat with new difficulties in a larger field. To his mind New York presented a vast, an almost boundless field of action. There, he thought, he could go and struggle on for years until, at length, he might be able to repay all his mother's care and love for him by cherishing and supporting her old age.

Hence Mrs. Wheeler offered but little resistance, and decided to let her son choose, trusting that he would be led to choose aright.

At the end of the week John sought his mother.

"Well, my boy," said the widow, fondly kissing him, "I suppose your mind is not changed?"

"No, mother; I am more anxious than ever to leave."

"And have you thought over all the chances and dangers, my son?"

"Yes, mother."

"I hope you do not think you will have an easy task before you."

"No, mother; I expect to encounter many difficulties. I expect to be often homesick at first; but the thought of you will cheer me. I will think that I am working for you, and that every day, and week, and month will only bring the time nearer when we can live together again."

"It takes a long time to become rich, John, dear," said Mrs. Wheeler.

"O mother!" replied the boy, "I will not wait till I am rich to bring you to me. A good salary is all I want. I can save money every year for that purpose too.

"Well, my son, I am glad to see that you do not cherish extravagant ideas. I hope too, dearest boy, that in setting out upon this new and untried life you will rely upon a stronger arm than your own. Countless temptations will be around you, and you will often scarcely know what to do. There is only the great God who can effectually assist you. Do you not know this, John?"

"I hope I do, dear mother."

"Have you thought of this?"

"Yes."

"Have you asked his assistance?"

"Yes, dear mother, I have," replied John, in firm and solemn tones.

"My dear boy, I would rather hear

you say that than anything else. As long as you trust in God you are safe. When you forget him then you are indeed in danger. While you are away I will pray for you always, and I want you to promise me that you will never fail to pray for yourself. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes, mother," said John, solemnly, "I promise you. I will pray every day, and the thought that you too are praying for me will give me greater strength to carry out this resolution."

Mrs. Wheeler's eyes filled with tears, and from her heart at that moment a silent prayer went up to the Father of the fatherless, asking him to watch over her only son, and be a friend and protector to him amid the untried dangers of his new life.

She then took her son's hand, and they both knelt down together. There, in the secrecy of that little inner room, the widow committed her son to the care and

keeping of his Almighty Father. 'There, in a prayer which seemed wrung out from her inmost soul, she besought the blessing of the Lord upon the youth about to go among strangers in a strange place. The heart of the lad was softened and his mind solemnized at his mother's earnest prayer. He felt the need more than ever of that heavenly assistance for which his mother so earnestly prayed, and when the petition was ended his heart responded a sincere "amen."

On this last day of John's home life there was much to be talked over between the son and mother. And it was now that Mrs. Wheeler spoke to him upon a subject never before alluded to. She spoke of it now for a warning to the inexperienced youth.

"I have never yet spoken to you of your father, my boy, have I?" she said.

"No, not once, though I have asked you about him many times," replied John.

"Well, since you are going away now, I will tell you about him."

John eagerly seated himself to listen, and his mother began.

"We were not always poor, my son. When you were born your father was very rich. We lived then in New York."

"New York!" exclaimed the boy, interrupting his mother.

"Yes."

"I didn't know we ever lived there."

"O yes; I and your father were born there. We spent our early lives there too. It was there also that your father commenced business. He was quite a young man. But Providence favored him. He grew rich rapidly, and bought ships. His ships made great sums of money for him. He was looked upon as one of the most able and successful merchants in the city. He was honored, courted, flattered, and was a rich and influential man."

"Is it possible that you were once

rich, mother? It seems strange, indeed," remarked the astonished boy.

"Strange to you, and yet true. But our riches did not last long. Your father connected himself in some way with a mercantile house in New York, and they speculated largely together. It seems that this house was not so rich as was supposed. At any rate, they were unable to pay their debts. Your father had to pay them all. He had become security for them, and there was no escape. It took all his property. What was still worse, it took his life. He was so completely overwhelmed by his loss that he sunk under it, and died of a broken heart."

"Has my father any relatives?" asked John, sighing as he spoke.

"Yes, and so have I," said his mother with some embarrassment. "I will give you letters of introduction to them. Your father's own brother is a merchant there. You were named after him. I have a brother too."

“You have such near relatives, and have they never assisted you?” inquired the boy with a look of surprise.

“My brother is not rich, but he has done much for me. Your father’s brother knows nothing at all about me,” said Mrs. Wheeler, turning away to avoid further questioning from her son.

John remained silent, and lost in thought.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRANGER.

A RAILROAD ran near Stockton, and John was to go by the cars to New York. Early on a fine summer morning, not long after the events narrated in the last chapter, he took his place in the cars. His baggage lay at his feet. It was not extensive. A good-sized valise contained all the earthly possessions of the youth who thus boldly went forth to seek his fortunes. But he did not feel at all afraid. He felt as though he went forth with the blessing of Him who said that he would be a father to the fatherless resting on his head.

Everything was novel to him. He had often seen the trains of cars hurrying along past his village home, but he had never before traveled on a railroad. As the train hurried him along with the rapidity of the wind, the trepidation which

he at first experienced gave way to new feelings of delight and exultation. He looked out upon the fields, the groves, the houses, and the telegraph posts, as they all flitted past him, and felt as though he had risen to a new and superior state of existence.

And then the towns that lay on his way presented another field for observation. Each town had its own characteristics. He found no end to his pleasure in gazing at the different villages, each filled with its own peculiar bustle and business. He scarcely thought that the great world had been so large or so populous. His mind seemed already enlarged by the short experience of a few hours.

A pleasant-looking old gentleman occupied the seat next to him. He noticed John's eager attention to all that was going on, with all his jumps and starts at each new object of interest that presented itself. For the first hour or two he said nothing, but merely noticed the lad with

a friendly smile. At last, as they were leaving a town which had possessed more than usual attractions to the young traveler, the old gentleman spoke :

“ A fine-looking town that, my boy.”

“ Yes, sir. Do you know its name ?”

“ O yes ; I’ve been in it often. It is called Newtown. It is a lively, bustling little town.”

“ *Little town !*” exclaimed John ; “ why, it looks *very large to me.*”

“ You have not traveled this road before, I suppose,” observed the old gentleman.

“ No, nor any other, sir. I have never been far from my village home before.”

“ It must be quite a novelty to you to travel by railroad, then.”

“ Yes, sir, and very pleasant.”

“ Are you going far ?”

“ To New York, sir.”

“ You’re going there, are you ? all the way to New York ? Are you not afraid of being lost ?”

“ No, sir, I guess not. Perhaps you

could tell me something about the place, as I do not know anything at all of the city."

"O I shall be very happy to do so. I live in New York. I'm sorry I'm not going there now; but I will give you all the information I can. Are you going there to live, or only on a visit?"

"To *live*, sir!" said John, a little proudly.

"Ah!" exclaimed the old gentleman, and then he smiled and asked: "Have you any place to go to?"

"No, sir. I'm going to look out for a situation."

"To look out for a situation! Why, you're young for that kind of business, I should think. And have you no place in your mind?"

"O yes, sir, several. I have relatives in New York."

"Relatives, eh! Perhaps I know some of them."

"One, sir, is named Broughton, William Broughton."

“ Ah ! what is his business ? ”

“ A bookseller.”

“ William Broughton ! I know him well. I think he is a fine man, my lad ; a noble old fellow. You will be safe if you put yourself under his care. Do you know any other ? ”

“ There is another gentleman to whom I have a letter. His name is John Wheeler. He has an office down town. He is a merchant of some kind.”

“ John Wheeler ! Why, my boy, he is one of the wealthiest merchants in New York. He is a millionaire. He can make your fortune by a stroke of his pen. John Wheeler ! why, your fortune is made already. You ought to be very thankful that you have such a friend already made, as I may say. You ought to go at once and see that man. He is said to be a generous sort of person to his friends, although tight and sharp in business.”

“ O sir,” exclaimed John, looking joyfully, “ I am so glad that you know some-

thing about my relatives. I do not know myself how they will treat me."

"Treat you? why, they will treat you well, I dare say. I may see you myself in New York. Pray tell me your name. I hope, my good lad, that we may see one another often hereafter."

"My name is John Wheeler."

"John Wheeler! why, are you, indeed, related to John Wheeler the merchant!" asked the old gentleman, with great earnestness in his manner.

"Yes, sir. He is my uncle," replied the boy.

"O, then, you are more fortunate than I supposed. In that case I do not imagine that you will ever stand in need of my assistance. I consider you a remarkably fortunate young man. But, my good lad, forgive me if I advise you to do one thing. If you are as prosperous as I suppose you may be in the future, be careful always to remember that Divine Being who gives you friends with ability to aid

you. It is not every lad who makes his first visit to town under such promising circumstances. Always remember that it is to God's kind providence you owe this; and never think that you can go through the world without relying on him."

"I hope I may always be thankful to him, I am sure," responded John, solemnly.

The time passed pleasantly away until at length the old gentleman rose to leave at one of the stations. He shook John warmly by the hand, said "God bless you, dear boy," and left.

The information which he had given was a great comfort to our youthful traveler. He felt more sure of a good reception. He therefore awaited his journey's end with considerable satisfaction.

Shortly after the old gentleman had left, John heard a faint cry close beside him. Turning round suddenly, he saw a little girl standing by his side, leaning against the seat and crying bitterly.

"What is the matter, my dear little girl?" he inquired kindly.

"I've lost ma," sobbed the child.

"Lost your ma? how?"

"There—there—she got out and left me there;" and as she spoke the child pointed toward the station which they had just left.

John took her up and tried to comfort her, though he scarcely knew what to do or say. What could be done to restore her to her parents? How should he act? After thinking a minute or two he said to the weeping girl:

"What is your name?"

"Emma Seymour," sobbed the little one.

"And where do you live?" he asked.

"In Villefort."

Villefort was the town which they had just left.

"But what a strange thing for a mother to leave her own child," said John half aloud to himself. The quick ear of the child caught his words, and she said:

“Mamma thought I was out, and she went away and left me. O my mamma! what shall I do?”

“There! there! don’t cry, Emma. I’ll get them to take you back to your mamma,” said John kindly.

He arose, and telling little Emma to be quiet a moment, walked forward to the end of the car. The conductor was there. John touched his arm.

“What’s the matter?” asked the man.

“There’s a little girl here who lives in Villefort. Her mother left her in the cars. Could you manage to get the poor little thing home?”

“A little girl,” said the conductor with concern. “Who is she? Let me see her.”

“She sits yonder crying. Do you see a little girl with pink ribbons in her bonnet?” and John led the conductor back.

“Why, little Emma Seymour!” exclaimed the conductor. “I know her. Why, how did you happen to be left?”

Don't cry. I'll have you sent back to your mother this evening. Won't you trust me?" he inquired kindly.

The face of the conductor seemed familiar to the little girl. At his promise her sorrow and fear seemed to subside.

"I live in Villefort," said the conductor. "There will be a change of conductors at the next station, and I go back again. I'll see that she is taken care of."

John felt relieved of his care for the child. The whole affair was to him quite a startling incident of railway travel. At the next station the conductor was as good as his word, and took the little girl home in the return train. As for John, this little episode filled his thoughts for the remainder of his journey.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TWO UNCLES.

AT last John Wheeler stood in New York. He arrived there late at night, so that he could not go and deliver his introductory letters at once. He therefore put up at a hotel not far from the station. The cabman who drove him thither charged him a large price, and on the following morning the hotel keeper charged him what was another large sum for his scanty means; so that when John looked into his poor little purse to see how much was left, he found, to his dismay, that he actually had only a quarter of a dollar.

He felt too anxious to eat much breakfast, so, taking his valise, he sallied out on his way down town. The size of New York astounded him, and well nigh bereft him of self-possession. However, it is not difficult to get a general idea of New

York; and by summoning all his faculties, he was at last able to comprehend the direction of Wall-street, in which his Uncle Wheeler's office was situated.

After much thought he had come to the conclusion to give his rich uncle the first trial. His wealth and generous disposition, of which the old gentleman in the cars had spoken so positively, were strong inducements. Besides, he remembered the object which he had in view in coming to town, which was, to get into a lucrative situation as soon as possible. He longed to gain a comfortable living, not so much for himself, however, as for his mother. The thought of his dear mother in poverty and old age fired his mind with the strongest desire to advance in worldly position. His Uncle Broughton, he thought, could not help him very much, whatever might be his good intentions. His Uncle Wheeler was not only able, but, as he believed, would be perfectly willing to help his brother's son. Besides.

he had no children, and he, the now poor and friendless boy, might become the rich man's heir. Who could tell?

Filled with such thoughts as these, our young friend traveled down Broadway. The shops were just beginning to display their various wares, carriages and omnibuses to roll and thunder along the street. He had never imagined that any city contained such a multitude of vehicles; and the crowd continued to increase at every step. As he went along, the great human stream poured on, not only on Broadway, but down all the side streets that cross it. He was bewildered, and almost overcome with surprise. However, he kept on his way boldly toward his destination in Wall-street.

Still on and on. He had been prepared to walk a great distance, for the hotel people had informed him that it was two miles to Wall-street. But in walking through a city, partly from the number of blocks and partly from the slowness

with which we have to walk, distances always seem greater than in the country. And so it was with John. When he imagined that he was near Wall-street, he found, on inquiry, that he was not yet half way thither.

On and on. Where did all the houses, horses, shops, and people come from? What a vast multitude rushed and hurried around him! How boldly the smallest children walked on through this great city! Was it possible that they all knew their way perfectly well? Would he ever be able to find his way about anywhere? And what a deafening uproar arose from the countless carriages as they rushed past him over the stony pavement!

At length, however, he reached Wall-street. The size and aspect of the office buildings rather startled him. After a few inquiries he found his way to his uncle's office. He had no difficulty, for everybody seemed to know where John Wheeler did business. He was half

proud and half frightened at his uncle's reputation.

The office was a large one, on the ground floor of a splendid stone edifice. His uncle's name was blazoned in glittering golden letters on the doors and plate-glass windows. Inside there was a multitude of mahogany desks, and in the inmost part he could see a private apartment. For a long time he stood outside, looking timidly in without daring to enter. He was very tired, and so he sat down upon his valise on the opposite side of the street to rest. But here he did not stay very long. The increasing crowd jolted against him, and at length the angry command of a policeman forced him away. So he walked down the street for some distance, and then back again, without being able to muster sufficient courage to enter. The aspect of his uncle's office took away all his spirit.

"It was getting late. John tried hard to rally his resolution. It was not strange

that he should be so affected. Coming to town from his simple country life, it was as though he stood before some palace, so grand was this office in his eyes.

The deep tones of a bell from a neighboring spire at length announced the hour of ten. John would stand it no longer. With a great effort he entered the office.

If he felt trepidation outside he was not at all reassured on entering. The desks were all occupied by well-dressed and supercilious young men, who did not deign to notice the poor country lad with his valise. People brushed quickly by him going in and coming out.

He stood meekly by the door, not knowing exactly how to act. At last he made an effort. Seeing a man standing at one of the desks near him, he went up to him and said timidly :

“Is Mr. Wheeler in?”

“No,” was the tart reply.

"Can you tell me when he will be here, sir?"

"He is generally here at ten," said the man curtly.

John fell back, not liking to ask any more. He felt very lonely. Nobody took any notice of him whatever. Holding on to his valise, he stood near the high counter waiting.

He waited for full an hour. Eleven o'clock struck from the neighboring church bell. At this time one of the young men who had cast several sharp glances at him came up to him and said :

"Well, boy, what's wanted?"

"Can you tell me, sir, when Mr. Wheeler will be in?"

"No, I can't; but you won't bring him any quicker by standing here with that luggage of yours."

John's face flushed, but he said :

"I wanted to see him, sir, particularly."

"Well, you'll have to look in again."

The poor boy sadly picked up his valise, which had been lying for some time at his feet, and slowly walked out. The bitterness of his disappointment brought tears to his eyes. He had expected so much from his rich uncle, and he had gained nothing.

He felt, however, that there was no time to lose; and now he thought of his other uncle. He would try there, and meet, perhaps, with better success. At any rate, he hoped he would not be as good as turned out of doors by a pert clerk.

He now retraced his steps into Broadway. His other uncle kept a bookstore in a street running off from Broadway. John knew the address well. He was not long in finding the street, and he found the number without difficulty.

It was a plain, modest, unpretending store, with small windows and neat interior. It seemed well filled with books. A young lad, several years John's junior,



was dusting books, and an elderly gentleman was leaning on the counter. At the sight of him John gave a cry of delight.

It was his acquaintance in the cars!

The gentleman looked up with a smile of pleasure equal to that which John felt. He held out both hands, and grasped those of John, saying:

“Well, you did not expect to meet me here?”

“No sir! I thought you lived at one of those towns on the road. How glad I am to see you. But I want my Uncle Broughton. Are you my—my—uncle?”

“I am your Uncle Broughton, my dear boy. At your good mother’s request I went up to Stockton on purpose to keep watch and ward over you on your way to this city; but I did not let you see me while there. I wanted you to act for yourself, and so I sat by you watching you, and talking with you. But tell me what you have done since I left you yesterday?”

John briefly told him what the reader already knows.

"Well, my dear boy," replied his uncle, "since you have come to me I will do the best I can for you. But still I think you had better see your Uncle Wheeler."

This, however, John positively refused. So rejoiced was he at finding his Uncle Broughton to be as it were an old friend, that he declared he would place himself under his care altogether.

"If you so choose I will take you into my store for the present, or until something better turns up. I will make you my clerk, and will give you as much salary as is right."

John was overjoyed. He felt that he would rather be clerk here with this generous man than even the heir of his great uncle in the magnificent office.

CHAPTER V.

UNCLE BROUGHTON.

JOHN found his situation to be a very pleasant one. He was fond of books, and to be in a bookstore surrounded by them on every subject was very pleasant to a lad of his tastes. His uncle did business in a very quiet way, without seeking to enlarge it to any great extent. His chief customers were ministers and school teachers. Many of them were in the habit of making this bookstore a place of call, where they met with one another and conversed upon literary subjects. Mr. Broughton was a very well-informed man. His conversation was agreeable and interesting. John found much benefit from listening to the conversation of those who resorted here. He gained much knowledge of a literary and also of a general nature. Being of a quick and

ready turn of mind he turned to the best advantage all that he heard. But he did not content himself with listening. He was most attentive to all the duties of his new situation, and none were more ready or more industrious than he.

There were two other clerks besides himself. One was a boy several years his junior, and the other was about his own age. The name of the latter was Henry Thornton. He had been about a year in his present situation. He was a quiet youth, with delicate frame and a pensive expression of countenance. There was something in his whole manner that won John's affection. He had received him most kindly, and he took the utmost pains to acquaint him with the duties which now devolved upon him.

Henry Thornton was a youth of the most devoted piety. Yet there was nothing gloomy or austere about him. He was generally cheerful, and tried hard to be more so than was natural to him.

Still there was an air of sadness about him at times which he could not banish, and which evidently sprang from some hidden, but recent cause. John asked his uncle something about this, but Mr. Broughton answered only in a general way, as though he did not care to have the subject spoken of.

There was a little circle of young men who were friends of Henry Thornton, and his constant associates after business hours. They belonged to different places of business in the city. They had all been induced by Henry to form themselves into a Bible class. Mr. Broughton instructed them on Sunday mornings, when they met at his house, and passed an hour and a half before going to their places of worship. They had also set apart Wednesday evenings for a prayer-meeting. This too was held at Mr. Broughton's house, and was always well attended.

John was taken into his uncle's house

at once as an inmate. His uncle was married, but had no children. His family consisted of Henry Thornton, John, the little shop boy, himself, his wife, and a servant. Never was there a more peaceful or a happier household. The heavenly Father was recognized there in every act and event, and his blessing fell on all within.

It was into such a place as this that John found himself thus providentially brought. He knew well the unusual happiness of his situation, and was grateful for so many blessings.

His mother was even more grateful. None knew better than she the dangers of a city life, and the temptations to which the young are exposed. She had been filled with anxiety at first when her inexperienced son thus ventured into such a center of danger and temptation as New York, and the advantageous position into which John had gone filled her with delight.

John roomed with Harry. A firm friendship arose between the two lads,

who had many feelings in common. John learned to admire the pure heart, the gentle and noble nature, and the pious life of his friend. Never before had religion appeared to him in so attractive a form. It was comparatively easy for him, under these circumstances, to live a harmless, and in some respects a useful life. All his companions and all the influences about him almost forced him to a life of religion. Outward temptations scarcely came in his way. The ordinary allurements to vice and sin could have little effect on him, for to him they did not come near enough to have much power.

Although he was very intimate with Harry, yet the delicacy of his feelings prevented him from inquiring too directly the cause of his secret sorrow. By degrees, however, he learned all. It was a mournful story that his friend had to tell.

Two years before his home was one of the most beautiful and luxurious in this city. His father was a great merchant,

his mother was a leader in fashionable society, and he was an only son, idolized by all at home. He had completed his preparatory studies and was about to enter a college.

Just about this time, when all his future life seemed most bright and promising, a fearful evil fell upon him.

His father had entered upon some immense undertakings, in which he had embarked all his wealth as well as the borrowed wealth of many of his friends. Most unexpectedly all his plans failed, and his speculations broke completely down. He lost everything; he was completely ruined.

The unfortunate man was utterly unable to endure the blow. Overwhelmed by his misfortune, he went to a hotel, addressed a farewell letter to his wife, and then, taking a pistol, hurried himself into the dreadful presence of his angry Maker.

His body was brought home, and the sight of the mangled corpse, with the ter-

rible letter, was too much for his wife to endure. Her reason gave way. She became the inmate of a lunatic asylum.

Poor Henry was called home to find his proud and loved father a ruined man and a suicide, his tender mother the inmate of an asylum, and himself the heir only of poverty, sorrow, and shame.

After hearing this, could any one wonder at the melancholy that had buried itself in the young man's soul?

CHAPTER VI.

C O M P A N I O N S.

A YEAR passed away in this quiet manner. During that year John had learned much. It had been one of almost uninterrupted happiness on his part. He felt grateful for this happiness, and above all for the extraordinary blessing of his situation.

He had labored so assiduously to please his uncle, and had made himself so useful, that he became almost necessary to him. Mr. Broughton was not the man to grudge any well-deserved reward, nor did he want to be asked. At the end of the year he paid John the balance of his wages, allowing him at the rate of three hundred dollars a year, and promised him five hundred for the coming year.

John sent all that he had to his mother. He soon received a letter from her which

filled him with pleasure. At last he felt that he was helping her.

“STOCKTON, *June 10th.*

“MY DEAREST SON,—I received your letter a few days ago with two hundred dollars for me. I would have refused your hard earnings had it not been for two reasons. In the first place, I know it is your greatest happiness to do something for me ; and in the second place, I owed a mortgage on our little property here of just that amount. I had to raise it years ago to keep us from ruin. It was due last week, and if it had not been for this I should have had to leave my dear old home. I felt very sad, and have for many months been anxious. I feared the worst, and had made up my mind to give it up. And it would have been a great loss to us, John, for it is worth three times this amount. But He in whom I trusted has saved me from this trouble ; and has blessed me not only in saving my

home for my old age, but in giving me a son to succor me. O John, how thankful should we be for all his mercies toward us !

“I am not surprised that you are doing so well. My dear brother is capable of any act of generosity. I have had so much help from him already that I feared to utter a word, even to you, about this mortgage, for fear he would pay it ; and I know he is not rich, and can ill afford to do much for me. My gratitude to him is more than I can ever express.

“How happy you ought to be with him and with your dear friend, Harry Thornton. Yet, John, though you may be out of temptation, beware ! watch and pray, lest you enter into it. You cannot tell in what shape evil may present itself. O watch against it !” . . .

This, and much more, his mother wrote. John had never heard of the mortgage. He now understood the cause of much of

his mother's anxiety which she had felt during the last year of his stay at home. He had never known the cause before. It all flashed across him now. He felt overjoyed at relieving her of so much distress. To think that he had already done so much for her was pleasant indeed.

About the middle of the second year that he spent with Mr. Broughton, he began to see a change in Henry. He became more absent-minded than ever. He contracted a habit of standing buried in thought. One evening his friend explained all. Said he :

“Well, John, you'll soon be head clerk.”

“Head clerk! what do you mean, Henry?”

“Promoted,” said Henry, with a smile.

“How?”

“In place of me—resigned.”

“I don't understand,” said John, with a puzzled look.

“It is this. I'm going to leave.”

"To leave ! What, leave Uncle Broughton ! Impossible !"

"I'm going away, really."

"Who will you go with ? Can you find any one equal to him ?"

"O it's not to another employer I'm going ; I'd rather stay here a poor man, than be rich with another person," said Thornton, with deep feeling.

"What can you mean ?" asked John.
"Please explain yourself."

"The fact is, John, since I have been here, I never for once supposed that I should stay here permanently. I have never liked business ; I have always looked forward to something else."

"Ah !" said John, beginning to half understand him.

"You know when I left off my studies I was ready to enter college. I love study above all things. A life of study is the life for me. Nothing prevented me from going on but poverty. Since I have been here, however, I have saved

almost money enough to take me through. I have also kept up my studies, so that I can enter a year in advance. Three years at college will do me now."

"And what will you be when you graduate?" inquired John.

"My aim and hope, John, is to be a humble minister of Jesus. For this I have toiled, and prayed too, ever since I first knew his love."

"Then I say, 'God bless you, Henry;' for I don't know anything for which you are so well adapted. We shall miss you here very much. Who will be our guide, our leader, when you are gone? But it is better for you. Business is not to your taste. You ought to be a minister. And I am glad that you have saved enough. I now understand, too, the reason why you have always studied so much at night."

"Yes, John; I have tried to waste no time, and I have succeeded pretty well. I have no fears but that I shall pass my

examination, and enter the sophomore class."

"O Harry! if I were as industrious as you, how much I might know!"

"And I too may say: 'O, John! if I were as assiduous as you, how successful I might be in business!' You are the right man here. Why, since you have been here the business has increased nearly one half. I go, feeling that Mr. Broughton has one to supply my place infinitely more useful to him than I could ever be."

"O Harry! you cannot mean that. I try to do well; but you do as much as I."

"Well, well, John, we won't dispute about it; only I say what I know. However, I've eased my mind now, and you know my plans. Let's to bed."

CHAPTER VII.

PROMOTION.

In a few weeks after the conversation just described Henry Thornton fulfilled his long-cherished scheme, and went to college. John Wheeler took his vacant place and became head clerk.

His uncle spoke to him in the kindest manner on the occasion.

“It gives me pleasure to tell you, John, that you are by far the best clerk I ever had. Henry Thornton is one of the best young men who ever lived, and I love him like a son; but I am making no disparaging remark when I say that he is too thoughtful, too studious to be a merchant. You suit me exactly in every respect.”

“I am very glad, my dear uncle, that I have given you satisfaction. To hear you speak in this way is my best reward.”

"I do not intend to confine myself to praise, John. I wish it was in my power to do as much for you as I would like."

"My dear uncle," interrupted John, "you have done for me all that man could do."

"You know my business," rejoined Mr. Broughton; "it is not very large, nor are my means extensive. Yet you are increasing them both. I will enlarge your salary this year to six hundred dollars. I wish I could do more."

"Six hundred dollars!" cried John in amazement. "To me that is a small fortune."

"Yet I hope and expect to enlarge it hereafter. I believe that at the present rate of progress I shall be better able to give you eight hundred dollars next year than six hundred this year."

"You may be sure, dear uncle, that I will do all in my power to repay your kindness, though I never can fully do so for what you have done already."

"I find, John," resumed his uncle, after a pause, "that you have certain business faculties which I do not possess in the same degree. You have judgment and quickness. You have also a very friendly way that attracts customers. Now you can very greatly improve my business by the exercise of these qualities. It is for my interest to allow you to exercise them. From this time I intend to leave my store more and more to you. You can thus identify yourself more with this business. In ordinary affairs I will leave things to your own guidance. I will only oversee in more important matters."

John's uncle knew well both the capacity and the disposition of his head clerk. He would not have felt justified in praising him if he had not thought he could bear to hear the language of approval. As it was, he knew that his words of commendation would only spur the young man to put forth fresh en-

ergy. And the result showed that he was right.

John threw himself into the business with new ardor. His situation now brought upon him more important duties. He had not only to wait upon customers, but also to manage very much of the business. Most of the buying and attending to the state of the stock, as well as the selling, now fell to him. He also attended to the book accounts, and in a short time so thoroughly mastered the system that he became a rapid and thorough accountant.

It was not without the closest application that John attained to this state of excellence, and much of his time was thus taken up. However, he had the satisfaction of seeing that his uncle's business was steadily increasing, that new customers were being added, the store becoming better known, and his uncle's profits considerably enlarging.

The secret of John's success was not

chiefly in his native talents, nor even in his industry. It was to be found in his *heart*. He loved his uncle, and felt grateful to him. He sincerely longed in all possible ways to repay him for his unexpected kindness. He felt, therefore, as much interested in his uncle's affairs as though they had been his own. No one works so hard for any one as for himself. Now John felt precisely as though he were working for himself. This principle is the true secret of the real Christian life. We cannot serve God really unless we identify ourselves with his service. We must so love him and be so grateful to him that we must seek in all possible ways to show the estimate we place on his love to us. When we have these feelings in their proper strength we shall then really do something in his service.

Three years passed away in this manner. Every year brought the same success and prosperity in John's career. His

uncle never ceased to evince for him the utmost good feeling and affection.

Through these three years John had heard nothing of his other uncle, except what every one heard of him. He could not help feeling glad that he had not tried there. He thought it a strong proof of his uncle's coldness of heart that he should take so little interest in his mother and himself as never to inquire about their welfare.

About this time he received a letter from his mother, which had much effect upon his after life. It ran as follows :

“MY DEAR BOY,—When your poor father died there was a little piece of land in a neighboring village which he and your Uncle Wheeler owned together. I dare say your uncle, in the midst of his great business, has forgotten all about it. It is partly his, however. These last few years it has been rising in value from nearly nothing to several hundred dollars, and a

gentleman wishes to buy it. He offers five hundred dollars. I want you to take this paper, which I inclose, and go to your uncle. State to him how it is, and get him to sign it, so that you may send it back. I do not suppose there will be any difficulty about it."

This, with much more good advice and counsel, was the subject of his mother's letter. John took the paper inclosed, glanced over it, saw it was a deed, and put it in his desk.

He could not help wondering what his uncle would say to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MILLIONAIRE.

FOR the second time John walked toward the office of his rich uncle.

He was a far different person from the timid lad who stood there four years previous. The discipline he had since been under, and his experience in business, had greatly changed him. He was now nineteen years of age, his face expressing manly resolution and energy, with good feeling and frankness. His figure was straight and compact, and he was dressed with neatness and good taste. There was no hesitation in his step, and he maintained the utmost calmness in his manner as he walked back to his uncle's private office.

His uncle was in. John looked at him with much curiosity.

He was a man of about sixty years of

age, rather under the middle size. He was as fresh and vigorous, however, as a man of thirty, and his face had a bright, animated expression. His glance was quick and penetrating, and his appearance rather prepossessing. He was pacing up and down by the office window as his nephew entered.

John walked up, took off his hat, and spoke in a cool, collected manner.

“You probably do not know me, sir. I am the son of your brother, Henry Wheeler. He owned a little property in Millford, near Stockton, in company with you. The property has risen in value, and my mother wishes to sell her share, or else —”

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Wheeler as he started back a little.

At John’s first words he had looked up and listened in an abstracted mood, until, at length, he seemed to understand who his visitor was.

“What!” he exclaimed again; “did

you say you are my brother Henry's son?"

"Yes, sir," replied John.

His uncle seized his hand with the utmost warmth and affection.

"Are you really my dear brother's child? Yes, yes, you must be. You look like him. You have his features; his air, all! When did you leave Stockton? How is your mother? She is so frightfully independent that I am almost afraid to write a letter to her for fear she would think I wanted to force my money upon her. But come, sit down. You must tell me all about yourself. When did you leave Stockton?"

There was so much sincere joy in his uncle's reception that John was touched. His assumed coolness was fast giving way to a warmer feeling. He was surprised to see this great man, this millionaire, whose wealth and position were so great, show such pleasure at seeing him.

He answered in a general way.

"It is some time since."

"What is your name, my boy?" said his uncle, kindly. "I must know what to call you."

"My name is John Wheeler."

"John Wheeler! The same name as mine."

"Yes, sir. My father named me after you, I believe."

"And how long have you been in New York?" inquired Mr. Wheeler.

"Four years, sir."

"Four years! what do you mean?" asked Mr. Wheeler, with an air of great surprise.

"I have lived here four years, sir," replied John.

"You have lived in New York four years!" said Mr. Wheeler, slowly.

"Yes, sir."

"And in that time you have never once been to see me—never let me know of your existence! Your mother also has not even written to me! I could not have

thought it possible ! What have you been doing ?”

“ I am a clerk with my uncle, the book-seller.”

“ Your mother’s brother ?”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Ah ! I see,” said Mr. Wheeler, musingly.

“ Do not misunderstand me, sir, I beg you”, said John, hastily ; “ I will tell you all about it, and you will think my conduct quite natural under the circumstances. When I came here I was quite a lad, and I was afraid that you would consider me a trouble.”

He then related to his uncle the whole story of his first visit to his office, his fear and trouble, his trepidation, and his final departure to his other uncle. Mr. Wheeler understood all at a glance.

“ Ah, well ! I suppose it was natural. I was half suspicious of Mr. Broughton. I am glad that my suspicions are incorrect. He is a just and generous man. He has

treated you well. And you say you have managed his business during this last year."

"Yes, sir. He was kind enough to intrust it to me."

Mr. Wheeler paused for a while. At length he resumed the conversation.

"Your mother, John, is a lady of the utmost delicacy of feeling. She was afraid of asking, or even seeming to ask a favor. I honor her for her feelings. I have always respected them. She was, without doubt, afraid to write to me directly when you came to town, lest she should be suspected of asking a favor of me. But I assure you, if I had known that you were here, I would have been most delighted to have seen you or assisted you. I am glad to see, however, that you have done so well where you are. You have been left to work your own way upward, and the lesson has been of very great service to you without doubt."

"I am sorry that I was so timid. But it was natural, sir, as I think you will see. Had I known that you would have cared particularly, I would have been glad to have called again."

"John," said Mr. Wheeler, laughingly, "you are your mother's own son; you have all her scruples and independent feelings. Well, well; it is honorable in you."

At this moment several gentlemen entered. John rose to go.

"John," said Mr. Wheeler, calling after him.

"Sir!"

"Come here to-morrow morning, at eleven o'clock precisely. I want to see you particularly."

"Yes, sir. I will be here."

And John, bidding his uncle good-morning, left the office.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DAZZLING OFFER.

ON the following day, at the appointed hour, John entered Mr. Wheeler's office. He found him there at his desk. As John entered he rose to meet him.

"I am very glad to see you again, my boy," said Mr. Wheeler, with the utmost kindness of tone. "I think when we know one another better, John, you will lament that you did not come here before. Sit down."

John sat down on a chair near his uncle, and waited to hear what he had to say.

"Since you left," said he, "I have been thinking much over your prospects. Your Uncle Broughton has been very kind.

"Very kind, indeed."

"And you naturally feel grateful to him for it all."

"I feel as though I can never repay him," said John warmly.

"Certainly, you do. Your feelings are natural. But let us look a little further. Your mother relies upon you for support."

"She does not rely upon me, but it is my dearest hope to be able to support her in comfort, if not in affluence," said John.

"Certainly, and so you are anxious to get rich, to be independent, your own master, so as to bring her here to New York and let her live in your own house."

"Ah, sir, that is indeed my wish ; but it seems almost too much to hope for."

"Yet you seem to be on the way toward accomplishing it now, do you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, John, I want to help you to do this more quickly," said Mr. Wheeler, with decision.

John's heart beat quickly. He wondered what was coming.

"I have no child in the world. Your father, my brother, was very dear to me always. I see in you my brother come back to life again. I am eager to do something for you. I am alone also, without any family of any kind. And now, John, I will tell you what I have thought of doing."

John wondered what it was, but remained silent.

"I want you," continued Mr. Wheeler, "to come with me, to enter my office as clerk, try what you can do, and I promise you I will give you every chance to rise in the world. I will give you a thousand dollars a year to start upon, and you shall be an inmate of my own house."

Mr. Wheeler stopped, awaiting the effect of this communication.

As for John, he was as if thunder-struck. In his uncle's office; in that great business, with a thousand dollars a

year ; living in his uncle's splendid house ! What wondrous fortune was this that had burst upon him, a poor widow's son !

"My dear uncle," said John, after a few moments' silence, "you astonish me. I was altogether unprepared for such kindness as this."

"I do not suppose that you can decide while sitting here, John. I know your kindly nature and grateful heart, and am well aware of the scruples that may arise to prevent you from deciding now. So I say, take this day to think it over ; or, if you like, take the remainder of this week ; write to your mother, ask the advice of your Uncle Broughton, and next Saturday, at this hour, let me know your decision."

"Such an offer as this, uncle, so generously made," said John, "would require an almost immediate acceptance ; and yet I have scruples, as you have said. I am glad that you give me time to consider."

"I want you to consider everything. Remember also that there will be heavier

duties and responsibilities here. Consider everything, and do not decide too hastily. Yet remember this: if your Uncle Broughton has claims on you, so have I. I have a right to your affection. You have been with him three years. Would you not be willing now to try the brother of your father?"

After a few more words John retired. He thought most seriously of these things all through the day, and wrote to his mother all about it, asking her advice in this most important matter. He felt as though this was the turning point in his life.

Nor did he forget a higher counsel. Most fervently he prayed to his heavenly Father, that he would guide him with his unerring counsel in this great crisis of his affairs.

He did not see his Uncle Broughton until evening. As soon as he met him he told him all.

Nothing showed so strikingly the noble

nature and utterly unselfish heart of his Uncle Broughton as his reception of this intelligence. He sat for a long time in silence, buried in deep thought. At last he spoke.

“My dear John,” he said, “this is indeed a most important question. You may remember that I once before spoke to you of your uncle as being a man of a generous disposition. I am not surprised at his present offer.

“When you first came to town, John, and turned away from his grand office to come to me, I was glad. You were young, and if you had gone there then you would almost inevitably have fallen a victim to the temptations that would have been thrown in your way. Your worldly prospects would have been better, but your heavenly prospects worse, so I rejoiced that you came to me.

“But now it is very different. You are old enough and experienced enough to fight with temptation. In doing so

you will perhaps be benefited more than by leading an easy life with me.

“Your worldly prospects will be ten thousand times better. Here you are in a small business. Your prospects at the best are small. There you can rise. You may probably be your uncle’s heir, and hereafter the owner of millions.

“So, John, I say, go. I am considering your own benefit only. I shall be sad indeed to part with my dear boy. You are very dear to me, and I love you as a son; yet for this very reason I say, go; I know that He in whom you trust will keep you, and I believe he has made this way for you.”

Tears stood in Mr. Broughton’s eyes. He was much affected, yet his decision was final.

On the following day he heard from his mother. She advised him to be guided by his Uncle Broughton’s advice, whatever that might be. The result was that John went to live with his Uncle Wheeler.

CHAPTER X.

THE WONDROUS CHANGE.

WHAT a change!

From the quiet of the bookstore to the immense activity of the great office in Wall-street; from attending to a few small bills to taking charge of great accounts; from almost no responsibility at all to that of the heaviest kind.

As I have said, it was one of the largest offices in the city. His uncle's business extended over the world, and involved millions. What it was all about, and what was the mainspring of that business, John did not know. He only knew that it was immense.

There were thirty or forty clerks and subordinates of the house. John at once was received with the most unbounded respect by all; for they saw in him the

heir of his uncle's fortunes and the future head of the house.

He felt strangely this universal respect and deference. It was a new feeling. Was it beneficial, or was it injurious? Time would show.

It was with strange emotions that he now recalled the time when he stood within that door, guarding his modest bundle, trembling with timid awe, and afraid to ask for his uncle. Had he been bolder he might long since have been in this office; yet it was better, perhaps, as it was.

The young man who had spoken so unkindly, and turned him away from the office, was here still. John remembered him well. But how different now! Among all the clerks none was so obsequious, so deferential, so profoundly respectful as he.

John's place was assigned him. He had his own desk, all to himself. With his usual diligence he applied himself to

mastering the difficulties of his new position ; but he was so quick at learning that he soon performed his part both easily and well.

But if his uncle's office surprised John, his house astonished him still more. He had never in his life seen such splendor. It was one of the grandest mansions in the city, and was decorated inside with the most costly ornaments. Pictures and statues appeared in every direction, with other objects of rare interest. The furniture was of the most costly description.

John had three rooms to himself. In fact, he hardly knew what to do with them. At first he was almost afraid to use the magnificent furniture. He had a bedroom, a dressing-room, and a sitting-room. In these three rooms there was more magnificence than ever he had seen in his life before outside of his uncle's house ; yet these rooms were as nothing compared with the rest of the mansion.

Nothing could exceed his uncle's kind-

ness and attention. The housekeeper and all the servants were ordered to obey John as though he were Mr. Wheeler himself. In the evenings, whenever he was at home, his uncle did everything in his power to make the time pass pleasantly. He was a man of fine education, large attainments, and genial conversation. John never enjoyed himself more than when his uncle had time to chat with him for an evening.

But there was no family altar in this house. There was no consciousness of the Divine presence. The name of God was never heard, and his praise never sounded within its walls.

And when Sunday came—the day of rest, the day of heavenly thought and worship—then John felt the greatest difference. His uncle did not rise till ten, and his breakfast was not ready till eleven. Yet he understood John's religious feelings, and respected them. He told his nephew that no feelings were

better for him, or more worthy of being cherished, than these ; hence he arranged John's meals on the Sabbath so that he might go to church and to Sunday school.

Mr. Wheeler himself never went. His time was taken up by business during the week, and on Sundays by sleep, music, and the fine arts. He loved to look at the exquisite paintings and sculptures which he had gathered around him regardless of expense, and felt sad because John could not enter into these feelings.

Yet, notwithstanding these drawbacks, John was treated with such constant kindness that he felt grateful and happy. He soon began to be accustomed to the splendor around him as well as to the business of the office.

One Sunday evening, after returning from meeting, he entered the parlor and began conversing with his uncle. After some conversation his uncle remarked incidentally :

“Your mother, John, is a very religious woman.”

“Yes, I think she is, sir.”

“She brought you up very strictly.”

“She tried to do for me what she thought right. I owe to her, sir, nearly all the knowledge of religion that I have. Her teachings will always be with me.”

“Well, it’s a blessed thing to have a religious mother. She exercises a refining influence over the mind that lasts through life. My mother died when I was very young. Your father was an infant, and I a little boy. We had no religious instruction, and I dare say I have been the worse for it ever since.”

“It is a great comfort, uncle,” said John earnestly, “to have the Almighty for our friend.”

“Yes; when a man can bring himself to believe that.”

“Man can scarcely do that. It is the work of God himself to teach man to trust in him.”

“Yes, yes ; at any rate, there are certain stages in a man’s life when nothing short of Divine power can make him love his Maker, or think about him. It is astonishing how a man’s mind becomes fixed and settled on one particular class of thoughts, and how difficult it is for him to care for other things.”

“And yet spiritual things are the most important by far, uncle. The Bible, as you know, asks, ‘What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’

“True, indeed ! what will it profit him ? But these subjects are all incomprehensible to me.”

And his uncle changed the conversation.

CHAPTER XI.

EVIL FOR GOOD.

JOHN, during the first few months, had but little sympathy with the other clerks. Their ways and their thoughts were altogether different from his. They went to balls, to the theater, and to saloons. They were, in short, what is commonly called "fast young men," while John was of another disposition.

They at first attempted to make John one of themselves, and tried very hard to induce him to join in their pleasures. Finding him utterly impracticable, however, they at last gave up. Had he been merely a clerk, like themselves, there is no doubt but he would have had to suffer much ridicule and sarcasm; but as he was Mr. Wheeler's heir they treated him with entire respect.

There was one young man, however

with whom John gradually formed quite a friendship. He was a fine, high-spirited youth, of about John's age. His lively disposition and frank nature made him a general favorite in the office. John soon began to like him very much. Destitute of companions of his own age, it is no wonder that he gladly took to such an associate as young Frank Rivers. Gay, good-humored, cheerful, never at a loss for the ways and means of amusement, he was the very companion to be welcome to one who was tired of being too much alone. And thus a friendship was formed.

Frank Rivers was one of those peculiarly light-hearted and thoughtless young fellows, who seem made only to enjoy the present. A thought of the morrow never seemed to enter his head. Religion, with all its truths, mysteries, and responsibilities, never troubled him at all. He seized the moments as they fled, and enjoyed them to the utmost.

The two young men gradually went

more and more together. Frank often went up to the house with John, and passed the night. Mr. Wheeler always received him kindly.

“John,” said Frank, one evening.

“What?”

“You’re a queer fellow.”

“Why?”

“O for a number of things.”

“What in particular?”

“You’re so confounded strict.”

“Strict! am I?”

“Yes; you straighten yourself up so, and won’t do as other people do.”

“Well, there are some things, I confess, that I restrict myself in.”

“Now what’s the use of it?”

“I do it because I think it’s right.”

“You don’t mean to say you think there is any harm in innocent amusement?”

“Certainly not.”

“Then why don’t you go to the theater?”

“Because I think the theater is any-

thing but a place of *innocent* amusement?"

"And your're really down on the theater?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm very sorry."

"Why?"

"Because I want you to go with me."

"I'm sorry to refuse."

"But why refuse?"

"I must obey my conscience."

"What's the use of such a conscience?"

"When one's conscience warns, woe to him if he disobeys it."

"Well, on your principle a man will have to cut himself off from everything."

"No, I have my amusements."

"Queer amusements they are. Come, now, won't you go to the theater to-night?"

"No, Frank, I can't."

"You think it's wrong?"

"Yes, most decidedly."

"Were you ever there?"

"No."

"Then how can you judge?"

"O one doesn't need to go there to be able to judge."

"O yes, he does."

"There I differ with you."

Frank fell into a brown study, which lasted for some time. At last he raised his head.

"John," said he, "I want to make an offer."

"Well."

"You've often asked me to go to one of your prayer-meetings."

"Yes."

"And I've always refused."

"Yes."

"Just as you have done about the theater."

"Yes."

"You'd like me to go very much."

"Yes."

"Well now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make an agreement with you. I'll go to your prayer-meetings twice a week if

you will go with me to the theater the same number of times. There, now ; what do you say to that ?”

“ Well, I don’t know,” said John. In fact, he was completely taken by surprise by Frank’s offer.

“ You don’t know ! Why, surely, it’s a fair offer. If I put myself into a prayer-meeting you ought to be willing to put yourself into a theater.”

“ Ahem !”

“ Or, to put it in your own words : You ought to be willing to go to the theater to get me to go to the prayer-meeting.”

John thought it over for a long time, and at last, falling into the cunning snare of his worldly-minded friend, consented to this strange arrangement.

Frank went to the prayer-meeting, and although his light and gay nature was ill at ease, yet he bore it patiently.

John, true to his agreement, also went to the theater. He felt guilty and un-

comfortable at first, but soon the music and scenes before him completely enthralled his senses. He yielded himself to the fatal enchantment of the scene.

After it was over he felt somewhat doubtful whether he was doing right ; but thought that at any rate, since he was doing it for Frank's benefit, it could not be wrong.

He did not think of the doctrine : " It is wrong to do evil that good may come."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEALINGS OF PROSPERITY.

JOHN did not ask his Uncle Broughton's advice about this. In fact, he had not seen his Uncle Broughton for a month. His new associate was his chief friend now. Besides, his uncle lived so far away from his present home that he could not well spare the time to go and see him.

Nor did he now write home so often as he used to do, and when he did write his letters were not so affectionate as formerly. His mother noticed the change, and alluded to it mournfully in her own letters to him ; but he reminded her that he was ten times more busy now than he had ever been before. So the good lady smothered her rising fears and hoped that all was right.

John and Frank for some time kept up

to their agreement. They went to the prayer-meeting on Monday and Thursday evenings, and on Tuesday and Friday to the theater. Frank soon found that each time it took less and less persuasion to get John to the theater. He also soon found that John began to accept almost any excuse for not going to prayer-meeting. A great change for the worse was already coming over him.

Soon he found that Wednesday evening was an excellent time to go to the theater, and Saturday was no less so ; so that instead of two, the young men now spent about four evenings in the week at that synagogue of Satan.

So easy is it to go down when the first step has been taken. John soon became thoroughly familiar with the play-house and all its connections. He was very well acquainted with all the plays, and could run off a list of the actors in the different houses as easily as he could name the clerks in the office.

And now another downward step was taken. The prayer-meeting was forgotten. Monday and Thursday were no longer sacred to prayer. They became, like the other evenings, theater nights. In fact, John was thoroughly led astray by this new temptation.

In this manner a year passed on; at its close John found himself very different from what he was at its beginning.

He had grown to be a highly fashionable and aristocratic young man. The consciousness of wealth and power manifested itself in his air and in the expression of his face.

For six months he had not gone to see his kind Uncle Broughton; that uncle whom he once loved like a father. He also restricted his writing home to his mother to once a month. She, fond mother, wrote to him every week, and tried to excuse his want of attention in every possible way.

He had now become a frequenter of

other places of evil besides the theater. For five months he had not been near a prayer-meeting; already even the Sunday services were growing irksome, and had he dared he would have forsaken even the sanctuary.

Had Frank Rivers been capable of appreciating the change he had produced in John Wheeler's character, he would have shuddered. But he, gay, thoughtless youth, had but a very faint idea that he was doing anything deserving of censure.

At the end of the second year Mr. Wheeler spoke to John:

"You are now twenty-one, John; are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have done very well. Step by step I have led you along, so that you now understand my business."

"I think I have mastered everything thus far," said John.

"You have. It is now my intention to

give you a share in the business. Henceforth you shall be my partner, and this is the firm of 'Wheeler & Co. ;'” and he displayed a new card to his astonished nephew.

John, though expecting something of this kind in the course of time, was unprepared for it just now. He stood almost unable to speak, only exclaiming,

“ A partner !”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MYSTERY UNVAILED.

JOHN was duly installed as junior partner in the great firm of Wheeler & Co. The respect which all persons had shown for him before was much heightened now, when they saw in him the controller of millions.

John had never known the real nature of much of his uncle's business. Some of it was open and palpable. But there were immense transactions which yielded enormous profits that were utterly secret. He had not liked to ask his uncle the nature of them, and so he remained in ignorance.

But now he was partner. All the books were open to his inspection. All the clerks and employees were subject to his orders. Nor was he merely a nominal partner. His energy and activity made

him take part in every affair, and be almost as prominent in business transactions as his uncle.

Several months passed on. John had not yet got over the feeling of exultation which arises from satisfied ambition. His suddenly acquired wealth and greatness, his power and influence, so vast for one so young, the almost unbounded respect with which the world treated him, all these conspired to raise himself in his own estimation. Since he relied so greatly upon himself, where was his former reliance upon God? Alas! where was it? and where was his fondness for prayer, for prayer-meetings, for his Bible, and for all the means of grace?

He had not seen Mr. Broughton for nearly a year. He felt at times that he had acted ungratefully toward that generous man, who had once been so kind a protector to him, and did not care now to think of him. Nor was he the kind and attentive son that he once was. His

letters were short and business-like. He was always in a hurry. He never mentioned the subject which once had been so dear to him, of bringing his mother to the city to live with him. That idea had grown weak during these days of greatness; but still his religious convictions had been too deeply laid to be shaken off altogether. Still his conscience rebuked him, and he was not happy. He still turned away in horror from plunging into polluting vices.

One day he went to the office as usual. His uncle had been absent for a week, and was expected on the following day. All the books and papers lay before him, open to his inspection. The letters that came he now always opened and answered.

There was one letter which came on this memorable morning which he could not understand. It had reference to that unknown part of his uncle's trade which had hitherto baffled his endeavor to find

out. He read the letter and reread it, but to no purpose. At last he looked up the name in the ledger, and found it one of the great series of accounts which were interwoven with his uncle's secret business.

He now deliberately set himself to work to unravel this mystery. He patiently commenced, and looked back from ledger to day books, and other subordinate books, searching out every entry. He soon found that there were a large number of different persons connected in this business in different parts of the world, all of whom were his uncle's employees or agents. He searched on, and the next step was the discovery that this business was carried on in certain movable articles of traffic; articles which brought a high price and sold at an enormous profit. A fearful suspicion now flashed into his mind. It was so painful to him that his heart beat in quick throbs of excitement.

He searched on. The hours of the day

passed. The routine of the daily business was all forgotten and neglected. He locked himself in the private room, and admitted no one. He was determined not to leave the office till he had searched the matter to the bottom.

The day had closed; the evening came; the clerks departed, leaving him alone; still he sat there. The neighboring clock struck out the hours of the night one after another as they passed away, until it was two o'clock in the morning.

During all this search the first suspicion which John had was hourly strengthening. Everything that he saw only proved its truth. At last he found one particular set of papers which contained it all.

The truth was known.

John rose from his chair pale and trembling. For a moment the tempter came to him, but he was instantly cast out. The temptation was in vain. John saw that he must obey his conscience. He had reached a point at which he had

to stop. He saw that he at least was ruined. This great business, this wealthy house, his uncle's favor, the honor, the flattery of the world, all must be resigned; for he found that his uncle's most profitable business was with parties in the Brazilian slave-trade!

That trade John had been taught by his mother to look upon with unspeakable horror. To reject it, yea, to loathe and detest it, was in his nature. When he saw that his uncle's business was of this nature there was only one thought in his mind, and that was that he must give it up. To a mind like his no other course was possible.

Alas for the hopes, the prospects, the glory of but a day before! John went back to his uncle's house and, late though it was, packed up the few things that belonged to him. The remainder of the night he passed in writing a letter to his uncle. Mr. Wheeler returned on the following day, and the first thing that met

his eyes was this letter. He started, and instantly stepped out into the outer office.

John was there. Catching his uncle's glance, he at once followed him into the back parlor. The door was shut.

John was pale, nervous, and sad.

"What is this?" said his uncle, sternly.

"It is my determination," said John; "I never made this discovery till last night."

"O!" said his uncle, with forced gaiety; "this is some hasty purpose of yours. Think again before you act. You are mad to decide so rashly."

"I have thought over it, sir, and my mind is fixed," was the calm reply.

"John, you are miserably squeamish," said Mr. Wheeler; "you have a certain amount of morbid feeling which will keep you down in poverty forever."

"It may be so, sir; yet on this point, uncle, I can have but one thought, one decision."

"Now, John," said his uncle, with

some asperity. "Be a reasonable man. I thought that by this time you would be a man of the world with an enlarged judgment, or I would not have left my business open to your inspection. I will tell you about it. Some years since I embarked in this trade. I found it profitable. I have continued it ever since, and my fortune has increased enormously every year. I see nothing particularly wrong in it. Those wretched savages are brought from their ignorant homes to a Christian and a civilized country, and are made better by the change."

"I know all the arguments that slave-dealers use," said John, calmly; "but they do not affect me in the slightest degree. Do you think I would give up all the hopes and prospects you have given me for a light cause? Indeed I would not. But I would rather beg my bread than grow rich on the profits of man-stealing."

"I thought you had more sense than to do it," said his uncle, dryly.



No. 688.

JOHN LEAVES HIS UNCLE WHEELER.

"I cannot endure the wrong, the sin, the misery connected with this trade, sir. From earliest childhood I have looked upon it as the curse of the world. And now when I find myself so closely confronted with it, I can only leap away, even if I leap to poverty and ruin."

"And leap to ruin you certainly will," said his uncle, coldly.

"Then be it so," said John; "better poverty with a quiet conscience, than riches with the curses of the oppressed, the groans of the suffering, and the wail of the dying to torment me."

"Why, sir," cried his uncle, starting up in a rage, "where will your folly carry you? You speak to me as though I were an oppressor and a murderer."

"I speak, sir, knowing that if I were in this business I should feel like one—"

"You—do—do—you." His uncle spoke slowly and rose from his chair.

"John," said he, after a pause, "you are a foolish boy. I'll forgive you your

insults, however, on one condition. Go, think this over; retract what you've said, and come back here like a sensible man."

"Impossible, sir," said John, firmly.

"Then, sir, we separate forever. Infatuated boy! I believe on my soul, even if I gave up this business, your wretched scruples would still interfere. You would say that my wealth is the price of blood, as some of your pious philanthropists do. Go! go! you have been brought up in a different school from mine; but some day, in poverty and want, you will lament the folly of this day."

And in a stately manner he waved John out.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DEALINGS OF ADVERSITY.

THUS John gave up all for the sake of his conscience. Yet he took no credit to himself for his determination. It was simply a question of conscience; and he felt that no amount of wealth, no conceivable honor, could tempt him to have any connection with such a business.

He went out of his uncle's office almost a penniless man. He did not go back; he did not even apply for wages, or share of profits. He walked forth with but two dollars in his pocket to screen him from want; and yet he felt a consciousness of integrity which made him feel happier, if not richer than his guilty uncle.

Whither should he go? Ah! that was a question difficult to answer. It would be useless, he thought, to try to get into any of the houses in Wall-street, even if

he wished to do so. His feelings prompted him to quit the street altogether. He could not endure in adversity the sight of those who had known him in prosperity.

Nor did he at once go back to his Uncle Broughton. It would have been far better for him had he done so directly; but he could not do it. He had treated him with such cold neglect and ingratitude that he could not face him again. Besides, he was afraid that his Uncle Broughton might wish to know the exact reason why he left Mr. Wheeler, and he felt unwilling to proclaim to the world the nature of that gentleman's unlawful business. He had been kind and generous to him, and John resolved that he would not betray him.

Day after day passed on, and still he got no situation. He glanced every morning down the columns of the daily papers in which "Wants" are chronicled, and went diligently to every place where he

thought there was a chance to be hired. The situations, however, were mostly so mean, and the salaries so miserably small, that he would not take them. He did not want to take a situation so low that it might keep him out of such as he was fitted to fill. Very soon, however, he had to decide or starve. He had not a cent left. So, in a state of half despair, he at length accepted the situation of under clerk in a drygoods store, where the work was very hard, and the salary only three hundred dollars a year, and a small commission on sales.

He felt reluctant to write to his mother. The change in his outward circumstances was too great. Could he let her know all the facts? He scarcely felt he could. He had written her a short, cold letter on the very day before the downfall of his prospects. He thought he would let another month pass before writing.

What a dreary month was that! The clerks were rude, selfish, and unpleasant;

the shopkeeper was tyrannical and mean. John, however, went on, endeavoring, as he always did, to accommodate himself to the exigencies of his new situation.

There is no doubt that this misfortune was of the utmost benefit to John. He had been wandering further and further from the straight path, his heart growing colder and colder, and his mind more and more averse to religion. If he had been permitted to go on thus, he might have lost his soul. As it was, the blow fell at the right time, and John learned to look up and kiss the hand of his heavenly Father.

The month passed away and he wrote to his mother. She had heard before of the change in his condition through Mr. Broughton. John found out afterward that this noble old man had always watched over him ; and when he left Mr. Wheeler's office had written to his mother, so that she might let him know where her son went when next she heard.

John was reading his mother's letter. There was a little lull in the business. The tears fell from his eyes as he read over the loving words. His old affection had all returned. Strange to say, his mother seemed almost to rejoice in his misfortune, so pleasantly and cheerfully did she write. She did indeed rejoice, for she hoped that the effect of this event would be of more value than much riches.

At length the storekeeper came angrily up to him, said :

"Here, sir, put down that letter," he cried with an oath. "I'll have no idlers in my store."

John meekly put the letter in his pocket, and turned to fold some cloths.

At this instant he heard a dear and well-remembered voice, saying :

"Is there a young man here named John Wheeler?"

John turned.

In a moment his Uncle Broughton had caught both his hands, and sobbed out,

"My dear, dear boy!"

The shopmen looked on in amazement. John could not speak.

"Come. This young man will not return, sir," said Mr. Broughton to the shopkeeper, and taking John's arm he made him get his hat, and then led him out before he could utter a single remonstrance.

"Why did you not come back to the old place at once, John?" he asked.

"I was ashamed of my conduct to you, and could not."

"Was there anything so terrible in me? If you had come to me at once you would have saved me a great deal of anxiety; for I was determined to get hold of my boy again, and so I've been hunting everywhere, advertising, running around, and making myself quite conspicuous."

All this Mr. Broughton spoke very quickly, but in tones of affection that sank into John's heart.

They walked along through the crowded

streets, and soon came near the well-remembered locality of his uncle's bookstore.

They entered.

John looked around. There had not been much change since he left. There were more people in the store, and more books.

"The business has kept improving ever since you left," said Mr. Broughton.

"How glad I am!" replied John.

"You gave it a new start, John."

"I?"

"Certainly; it was quite small till you came."

"Then I hope I may be as successful again."

"We shall see," said his uncle.

That evening Mr. Broughton talked with John very particularly. He had an important announcement to make.

"John," said he, a little abruptly, "I'm growing rather old, and as I am quite well enough off for me, I do not think it

is necessary for me to wear myself out at my time of life. I want to sell out the business. I have resolved to offer it to you.

"To me, uncle!" cried John; "I haven't a cent in the world. Indeed, I could not buy myself a suit of clothes!"

"Well, I will let you pay me in yearly installments: in one, two, three, four, five, or as many more years as you please."

"O uncle, you are too good!" said John.

"It's better for me. It will suit me exactly," said his uncle.

"And it is a splendid opening for me," said John, enthusiastically.

"I'll tell you also what I want you to do. Try to enlarge your business. It will bear it. You must succeed."

John had not been home for some time, so he took advantage of the present occasion to go and see his mother. She rejoiced at his good fortune in having so generous a friend as her brother. After hearing his account of the cause which led him to quit his Uncle Wheeler, she said :

“My dear boy, I have always suspected that your Uncle Wheeler was engaged in some kind of business that was not altogether right. On that account I always refused his assistance, and was not at all anxious for you to go to him. However, I intrusted you to Providence, and when Mr. Wheeler actually offered to take you with him I could only refer you to Mr. Broughton, who shared my suspicions. He thought, however, that you would find out yourself in the course of time, and your own conscience would be a safe guide.”

“I am glad that it all happened just as it did,” said John. “I have gained useful experience with Uncle Wheeler, and have learned that the so-called pleasures of the world are sorrows in disguise, and that there are no riches to be compared to a peaceful conscience.”

“My dear John, I rejoice to hear you talk so. You may indeed say that it has been good for you to have been afflicted.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONCLUSION.

ON John's return to New York he entered into business on his own account with the greatest possible energy. His uncle would have given the business to him for the value of the stock; but he knew that John would be more pleased to give some compensation for it, and feel that he had done something to get it; so he sold it to him for a very small sum above the price of the stock, to be paid in annual installments.

John entered into the business with his whole soul. It was moderately profitable, and he soon had to enlarge the store to meet its increasing demands. Some changes in the city about this time diverted an immense amount of travel past this store, and raised the value of business in the street.

By skillful management and untiring energy, by taking advantage of every opportunity, John so well managed the business that at the end of a year he had made enough to pay considerably more than the installment due to his uncle. The old man took it with a smile.

“John,” said he, “you are now doing well; why not bring your mother to live with you, and let me be cheered by my sister’s company. Here’s my house. Can’t we be happy together?”

“Just what I have been anxious to do; but I did not think of your house, uncle. It would be by far the best arrangement for us all.”

So after a little conversation the preliminaries were arranged, and John, to his great delight, soon welcomed his dear mother to New York, and the property in Stockton was sold.

“We will never part again, dear mother. You shall live with me for the remainder of your life,” said John.

"My dear boy!" exclaimed his mother with tears of gratitude in her eyes, "under God you owe everything to my generous brother."

"I know that well," said John, "and even now he's always on the lookout for some way of helping me."

They were now all united in as happy a family as could be found in the city.

Three years passed, and John's business enlarged greatly. He was looked on as a prosperous young merchant, who promised to become a prominent man in the city.

John had never heard anything directly from Mr. Wheeler since the day when he left his office. He heard of him indeed, and saw his name in the papers in connection with great financial operations; but nothing more. Still he wished that he could be reconciled to him, because he felt grateful for all his former kindness to himself.

One day a man came into the store and called for him. It was Frank Rivers.

“My dear Frank, how do you do?” said John, who was very glad to see him.

“Very well,” said Frank hurriedly, and out of breath. “I came from your uncle. He’s dying, and wants to see you at once. Disease of the heart.”

John turned pale. Mr. Wheeler, in spite of his errors and sins, had a large share of John’s gratitude and affection.

In a moment John had bounded out of the store, and, followed by Frank, was hurrying toward his uncle’s house. Jumping into a hack, he was not long on the way. At length he entered Mr. Wheeler’s room. It was the bedroom that John once used himself. In the hurry of entering he still had time to notice that everything was exactly as he left it; every ornament, and all the little articles that once were his, still stood in their old places. Had Mr. Wheeler loved him so?

His uncle lay upon the bed. John was shocked at the change. His emaciated countenance, and large eyes sunk in hol-

low, cavernous sockets, had altered his appearance greatly.

As John entered his face brightened up. He held out his thin hand. John took it in both of his. Tears stood in the eyes of both as they met again.

"Dear boy," said Mr. Wheeler, "I was harsh to you. Forgive me."

"I never had anything to forgive," said John. "I have felt nothing but gratitude toward you."

His uncle pressed his hand.

"John."

"Sir?"

"You were right, my boy. I have been wrong, wicked. O how differently we reason and feel when prostrated on the bed of death."

There was a pause.

"You once spoke of the consolations of religion. I cared nothing for them then. Speak to me now about them."

Then John spoke of God's love and mercy, and tried to show his uncle how

the Lord was more anxious for his salvation than he was himself. He told him how infinite was his pity and compassion, how wide-reaching his love.

Mr. Wheeler lingered on for days. John lived at his house altogether, for the uncle was not at ease in the absence of his nephew. In his condition perfect calmness was absolutely necessary.

John talked, read, and prayed with him. At last, after many struggles, a light seemed to enter his mind, which by degrees increased to something like brightness.

From that time forth he gradually sank, and at length, leaning on the breast of John, and uttering the word "Peace," he breathed forth his soul to God who gave it.

On examining his will it was found that Mr. Wheeler had bequeathed his entire fortune to John. It amounted to over four millions of dollars. The will had been made only a few months before his death. In it he charged his heir

to use this property for the benefit of the oppressed, through whose tears much of it had been gained.

John gave up his store and took possession of his estate. He held it in trust for the poor and needy. His was not obtrusive charity; his deeds of mercy were mostly in secret; but from him a constant stream of bounty poured forth to many a deserving object.

Frank Rivers, whom the death of Mr. Wheeler had made more thoughtful, was established by John in business, and his old friend, Henry Thornton, was sent out with his means to found a mission in Africa.

And now, with his mother and uncle, and in the possession of immense wealth to spend in deeds of mercy, let us leave John Wheeler to enjoy his well-deserved happiness and the smile of Heaven.

